

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-12

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 082161

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SHUM, KS, US

SUBJECT: TRIAL OF AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER

REF: SEOUL 1931

1. DEPARTMENT RECENTLY RECEIVED A LETTER FROM JOHN K. GALBRAITH EXPRESSING CONCERN THAT ROKG IS TRYING PROFESSOR YI YONG-HUI AND PUBLISHER PAEK-NAK-CHONG ON CHARGE THAT PROFESSOR YI'S WRITINGS PRAISE COMMUNISM. GALBRAITH, WHO WROTE ONE OF WORKS INCLUDED IN "DIALOGUE WITH 800 MILLION," URGES USG TO MAKE STRONG REPRESENTATION TO THE ROKG ON INCONSISTENCY OF TRIAL WITH ELEMENTARY CONCEPTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERESTS OF KOREAN PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT.

2. ROK EMBASSY POLITICAL COUNSELOR PARK MENTIONED TO EA/K MARCH 24 THAT EMBASSY HAD RECEIVED A SIMILAR LETTER FROM GALBRAITH. PARK AGREED WITH DEPARTMENT OFFICER THAT CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE CASE IS DEVELOPING IN U.S.,
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STARTING WITH FRIENDS OF ACCUSED (INCLUDING FRASER STAFFER BAKER WHO IS ORGANIZING A SUPPORT CAMPAIGN) AND AUTHORS OF WORKS INCLUDED IN "DIALOGUE". PARK SAID THAT AMBASSADOR KIM HAD TAKEN GALBRAITH LETTER WITH HIM TO SEOUL WITH INTENTION OF EXPLAINING TO ROKG SERIOUSNESS OF POTENTIAL

U.S. REACTION.

3. TO DATE, DEPARTMENT HAS RECEIVED ABOUT 10 CONGRESSIONAL AND PRIVATE INQUIRIES ON THE CASE, BUT AS SUPPORT CAMPAIGN INTENSIFIES OR IF COURT RENDERS GUILTY VERDICT, WE EXPECT A WAVE OF PROTEST FROM PROMINENT AMERICANS.

4. EMBASSY SHOULD TAKE EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO APPROACH ROKG AT APPROPRIATE LEVEL AND EXPLAIN GROWING U.S. PUBLIC CONCERN OVER PLIGHT OF DEFENDANTS YI AND PAEK. EMBASSY MAY EXPLAIN THAT, ALTHOUGH WE ARE UNAWARE OF SPECIFIC CHARGES AGAINST THE MEN, INFORMATION SO FAR AVAILABLE TO PUBLIC HAS GIVEN THE IMPRESSION THAT DEFENDANTS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO COURT ON FLIMSY GROUNDS. EMBASSY SHOULD POINT OUT OUR VIEW THAT CONVICTION OF YI AND PAEK WILL PROBABLY HAVE SEVERE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF ROK'S RECENTLY IMPROVING HUMAN RIGHTS CLIMATE, WITH POSSIBILITY OF ADVERSE IMPACT ON U.S.-ROK RELATIONSHIP. COOPER

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